



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

And It Was Good / Week 2

SERIES OVERVIEW

SERIES SUMMARY

A 4-week series about justice.

SERIES BOTTOM LINE

The role you can play in God's story of humankind.

WEEKLY BOTTOM LINES

WEEK 1: Justice says good enough isn't good enough.

WEEK 2: God is working with you when you choose to do good work.

WEEK 3: Because God is always good, God is always pursuing justice.

WEEK 4: Because good enough is never good enough, justice never stops.

SCRIPTURE

Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?"

They replied, "Certainly, Your Majesty."

He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!"

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them (Daniel 3:24-27 NIV).

See if there is any offensive way in me... (Psalm 139:24a NIV)

NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

THINK ABOUT THIS

Be prepared this week to have students open up about difficult injustices they've experienced. While you may know about some of these, this could be the first time some high schoolers share about what they've

gone through. Injustices like racism, poverty, abuse, discrimination, and more may be mentioned. How you respond to what they share is critical, so take a moment to pause and consider your words carefully. Create a safe space for everyone in your ministry by handling the emotions and experiences brought up in a healthy, helpful way. Be quick to acknowledge the courage it takes to open up and share honestly. Affirm that the injustice they're experiencing is wrong and offer them the chance to speak into how you can help or support them through it. Then, actually do it! Be someone who is willing to step into the fire of what they're facing alongside them. Be someone who gets into the flames with your students and stays there until the work is done. Of course, if something is shared that brings to light a dangerous or harmful situation, take it to your Ministry Leader for further help and action as soon as possible.

NOTE TO THE COMMUNICATOR

In the *Interactive* suggestion this week, it would be a fantastic idea to find several adults from your community who have experienced some sort of injustice. Look for individuals in your community who may be using social media as a platform to do good work for justice. Ask them to say a few words on video about how it feels to be treated unjustly. Then show the video as a part of the large group experience. This will help personalize such a relevant idea for your students.

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- While there are some situations in life that can fall into gray areas, for the most part, we can determine when a situation is good or bad rather quickly.
- *[Communicator Note: Talk about a time when you or someone close to you experienced an injustice.]*
- We've been talking about injustice the past couple of weeks, which we've defined as the things in our world that are unfair, unequal, or not right.
- It's painful to experience injustice and it can make us ask the question: "Why doesn't somebody *do something? What am I supposed to do about it?*"

TENSION

- If you've been the victim of injustices like racism, oppression, discrimination, or prejudice, then you know what that feels like. And if you haven't, here are some experiences from real people who have.
- *[Note: The Interactive happens here. See your Teaching Script for details.]*
- If you've felt that way, you may show up each week and wonder, "How do I handle this when it's happening TO me and not just AROUND me?"
- Or maybe others of you are thinking, "That's NOT me. That's not my story." But, as a community, when one of us suffers, we all suffer.
- If you're experiencing injustice or have experienced injustice, what do you do? What do you do when you feel like you're alone in that?

TRUTH

- There was a Babylonian king named Nebuchadnezzar who was very powerful and had conquered and captured Israel. He built a giant golden statue that stood 90 feet tall and ordered everyone to bow down to worship it. If they chose not to, they would be thrown into a blazing fire.
- The Bible tells us that there were three Jewish men named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who were worshippers of God and refused to bow down to the statue.
- The king ordered the fire to burn seven times hotter than usual! Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were tied up and thrown into the fire.

- While none of us have been thrown into fires recently, we can probably agree that this feels unfair. And many of us do know what it feels like to be treated unfairly.
- In a moment of extreme injustice, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did the good work of standing up for what was right. And in the middle of that, they were not alone. God did not abandon them or leave them to suffer on their own (*Daniel 3:24-27 NIV*).
- In the same way, as you do the good work of helping shift bad situations to good, God makes sure you are never alone when you face injustice. When you experience injustice and stand up for yourself, or when you witness injustice and stand up for someone else, you don't have to face it alone.
- **BOTTOM LINE: God is working with you when you choose to do good work.**
- God cared about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and made sure they weren't alone in their suffering or their injustice.
- In the same way, God cares about you and doesn't want you to be alone when you face injustice.

APPLICATION

- Maybe you hear this story and can relate to the injustice. I want you to know that you don't have to be alone. God is with you.
- Here are some steps for you to consider:
 - Talk! Talk to Jesus about what you're dealing with and how you feel. Talk to a trusted leader about what you're experiencing or dealing with. Talk until someone hears you!
 - Consider getting help from a professional counselor or mentor.
 - Don't give up. Keep moving.
- Some of you may have heard that story and thought, "I haven't really experienced injustice." The difficult reality is this: **Injustice is all around us and sometimes we participate in it by allowing it to happen while we watch.**
- If that's you, YOU can talk to God about it (*Psalms 139:24 NIV*).
- Start by asking God to help you see ways that you've participated in injustice.
- *[Communicator Note: Depending on the personality of your group and your students' unique experiences with injustice, this week may feel heavy and require some time to think, pray, and process before moving to small group conversations. Consider closing the service with a worship song before moving to small groups.]*

LANDING

- When injustice happens, it's painful. But you don't have to figure out how to shift that bad situation to good all alone. Not only is God with you, but so are the people in your small group.
- In your small groups, the conversation you have today has the potential to be one of the most honest, personal, and important discussions you've ever had.
- Maybe today, your group can be a real human reminder that when you experience injustice, you don't have to do something alone.

INTERACTIVE

This Interactive happens in the Tension section of your message. Please see that section for more details.

What You'll Need

- A pre-recorded video of a short interview with someone in your community who has (or whose family has) experienced injustice.
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TEACHING SLIDES

All bolded words and phrases in the Teaching Script are also provided as teaching slides for Premium Tier subscribers.



TEACHING SCRIPT

And It Was Good / Week 2

BOTTOM LINE

GOD IS WORKING WITH YOU WHEN YOU CHOOSE TO DO GOOD WORK.

INTRODUCTION

2 MINUTES

While there are some situations in life that can be categorized as gray areas, for the most part, we can determine when a situation is good or bad rather quickly. Something about a bad or unfair situation makes us feel a certain way. Often it starts when we're young and we see someone get something good that we didn't get. That's when we begin to let it be known we've been treated unfairly. Like when a sibling gets a toy or candy that the other sibling didn't get. Or when a friend gets to turn in their homework late, but the other friend gets points off for being late. But sometimes unfair situations can be way more serious and have even worse consequences.

Tell A Personal Story . . .

- *Talk about a time when you or someone close to you experienced an injustice.*
- *Here's an example story. . .*

My freshman year of high school, I had to write a report about World War 2 for World History class. We had a little bit of creative freedom, so I decided to write about the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, and I interviewed my grandparents who had all been alive on that fateful day. I wanted to learn about what it was like for my Japanese-American grandparents during that time.

As you may have learned in school, on December 7, 1941, the Japanese Navy attacked the U.S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor, in Hawaii. This caused the U.S. to declare war on Japan and join the second World War. Out of fear that any person of Japanese descent living in America could be a spy, the U.S. government rounded up Japanese-Americans who had nothing to do with Pearl Harbor and forced them to move to what they called internment camps. For three years, around 120,000 Japanese-Americans who called the United States home were held at these camps¹. But this isn't just something I know about from the history books. It's personal to me because three of my grandparents went to internment camps.

My grandma was detained in one of those camps instead of being allowed to start college. She never got the opportunity to go to college after the war, which affected the rest of her life.

And my dad's parents? They met in the internment camps and got married after they were released, which sounds like a happy ending except that they lost everything they had before the war, including their property

¹"Japanese American Internment | History & Facts." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 9 May 2014, www.britannica.com/event/Japanese-American-internment.

and businesses. Though they made the best of it, the hurt and injustice they experienced continued to shape them for the rest of their lives. Injustice is a very real part of my family story.

We've been talking about injustice the past couple of weeks, which we've defined as the things in our world that are unfair, unequal, or not right.

It's painful to experience injustice, and it can make us all ask: **"Why doesn't somebody do something? What will it take to make this situation shift from bad to good?"**

It's even worse when injustice is ongoing, systemic, and constant. Last week, we talked about how God sees and cares about what's happening. **God is implicitly against injustice. Part of following Jesus means we care about the things He cares about. And that we care enough to actually help shift a situation from bad to good!**

TENSION

4 MINUTES

Maybe you hear that and think, "That's great, but what am I supposed to do about it?" When you look at the world and see how many things aren't fair or cause people harm, it can be overwhelming. We see people who've been victims of injustices like racism, oppression, discrimination, or prejudice. Maybe you yourself have had to deal with those things in your own life. And if you haven't, here are some experiences from real people who have.

INTERACTIVE

[Note to Communicator: Before your message, shoot a video with some adults from your community who have experienced injustice. Do not assume anyone's story or that they would want to tell it on stage. Rather, find participants by reaching out to those in your community who are already speaking openly about their experience (in person or on social media) as part of their justice work. Ask them to say in a few words how it felt to be treated unjustly. Then, play the video at this point in the talk.]

If you've ever felt that way, you may show up each week and wonder, "How do I handle this when it's happening **TO** me and not just **AROUND** me?"

Or maybe others of you are thinking, "That's **NOT** me. That's not my story." I get that, too. But as a caring community, when one of us suffers, we all suffer. This is a good opportunity for you to hear what injustice feels like to someone in your community who is experiencing it. That's why I want to challenge you to lean in and practice what we talked about in our first week: Be curious.

So, if you are experiencing injustice or have experienced injustice, what do you do? What do you do when you feel like you are alone in that? What do you do when you realize someone in your vicinity is experiencing injustice?

With that in mind, I want to tell you a story about three friends and what happened to them.

TRUTH

8.5 MINUTES

Around 600 BC, there was a Babylonian king named Nebuchadnezzar who was very powerful. He conquered and captured the people of Israel. One day, he built a giant golden statue that stood 90 feet tall and ordered everyone to bow down and worship the statue whenever they heard certain music playing. If anyone chose not to do as ordered, they would be thrown into a blazing fire! One of the authors of the Old Testament, Daniel, wrote that there were three Jewish men who had been captured named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were worshippers of God and refused to bow down to the statue.

You could probably guess that the king wasn't thrilled by this news, and he ordered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be brought to him. He gave them one more chance to bow down and worship the statue when the music played or but these three men stood their ground. They knew it wasn't right for someone to force them to worship anything other than God, and they believed that God could rescue them. But even if God didn't, they still didn't want to turn from their devotion to God. What an incredible example of courage and faith!

So of course, the king was in full on rage-mode now, and ordered the fire to be turned seven times hotter than usual! Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were tied up and thrown into the fire. The furnace was so hot that the soldiers who threw the men into the fire died simply from coming near the flames!

Now look, I think we can agree that this situation is intense and unfair. And **many of us do know what it feels like to be treated unfairly . . .**

- **To be discriminated against for our skin color.**
- **To be treated like we're less-than because of our family's finances.**
- **To be held back because of our gender.**
- **To be considered less important because of something we have absolutely no control over.**

And if you've experienced injustice, you know it can be scary, frustrating, and sad. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, I'm sure, felt all those things.

Now, let's continue with the story. I want you to hear what happened next when these men were in the fire.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?"

They replied, "Certainly, Your Majesty."

He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!"

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them (Daniel 3:24-27 NIV).

Now, there are many Bible scholars and researchers who have opinions about this story and who the fourth man in the fire was. Was he God? Was he Jesus? Was it an angel or someone else? I don't know the answer, but one thing is clear: In a moment of extreme injustice, these three stood up for what was good and what was right. And in doing what was good, God made sure they were not alone. They were doing good work, and God did not abandon them or leave them to suffer on their own.

And in the same way, when you choose to do good work in spite of injustice, God will work with you and not abandon you.

Let that sink in.

God is working with you when you choose to do good work.

God cared about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. God cared about their choice to do what was good—standing their ground and standing up for what was right. In the middle of all of that, God made sure they weren't alone in their suffering or their injustice. Did things change eventually? Yes. Did the laws change as a result of the injustice? Yes. But don't miss what happened while they were suffering. **God cared for them.** In the same way, **God cares about you** and doesn't want you to be alone when you face injustice.

APPLICATION

3.5 MINUTES

Maybe you hear this story and feel the injustice part. Maybe you are so tired, so hurt, so burned by things you've experienced that you don't know where to turn. I want you to know that you don't have to be alone. God is with you. God hears you. If you're processing that for the first time, or just don't know what to do next, here are some steps for you to consider:

- 1. Talk.** Talk to God. God cares more than you even realize. Share your feelings of frustration, confusion, or hurt. Talk to your small group leader or a trusted adult. Even if you think they won't understand, keep talking until someone does hear you and understands!
- 2. Ask for help.** Talk to your family about getting guidance from a professional counselor or mentor. Or ask about other resources that might be available to help you process the injustice you experienced and begin to heal. Don't underestimate the pain that dealing with injustice can cause.
- 3. Don't give up.** The guys in that fire didn't give up. Let's be honest. YOU shouldn't have to do anything about the injustice that is affecting you. Others SHOULD step up. Generations older than you should have figured this out by now. It's unfair. All that is true. But at the same time, it's important to come out on the other side of injustice healthy and safe. So, keep moving. Don't give up.

Some of you may have heard the story we just read and thought, “I haven’t really experienced injustice. Does that mean I’m like the evil king who caused the injustice?” While that’s possible, it could just mean you’re more like the people in the crowd who watched while injustice was happening but did nothing. Sometimes we participate in unjust situations by allowing them to happen while we watch. Maybe you don’t throw people into a fire, but maybe you . . .

- Laugh along when you hear a racist joke.
- Listen to music that degrades women.
- Watch people get bullied for what they’re wearing, what they look like, or even because of a disability, but you don’t say anything.

If that’s you, you can talk to God about that, too. In Psalm 139, the writer is humble and vulnerable and asks God the most open question:

See if there is any offensive way in me (Psalm 139:24a NIV).

Start there. Ask God to help you see ways that you’ve participated in injustice. This is so important because the truth is, some people you care about most—your friends from school or small group—have been on the receiving end of injustice. And maybe, for the first time, you see it differently and you care differently because of how it affects them. Let it become personal to you.

[Communicator Note: Depending on the personality of your group and your students’ unique experience with injustice, this week may feel heavy and require some time to think, pray, and process before moving to group conversations. Consider closing the service with a worship song before moving to small group. One option that connects to the text: “Another in the Fire” by Hillsong United.]

LANDING

1 MINUTE

It’s painful when injustice happens, but you don’t have to do the work alone. **God is working with you when you choose to do good work.** Not only is God with you, but so are the people in your small group. That’s why we have small groups! We want you to have a group of people who are FOR you. We want you to have a group of people who listen TO you, pray WITH you, learn FROM you, and cheer FOR you.

In your groups, the conversation you have today has the potential to be one of the most honest, personal, and important discussions you’ve ever had. If you’ve experienced injustice, think about how you can tell your group that you need support. If you haven’t experienced injustice, think about how you can do the good work of either sharing your experience or listening and genuinely caring for someone in your group.

This may sound like a lot right now. I get it. Even if you don’t talk to your whole group tonight, I hope you’ll talk to your leader. They signed up to do this because they want to be here for you. Maybe today they can be a real human reminder that when it comes to injustice, God is working with you as you do good work.



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS